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ABSTRACT

This project investigated policy statements, training given to academic staff, and the reward structure and career path for academics in distance education among four major providers of distance education in Australasia. Seventy academic staff members from two universities and two colleges were interviewed and asked to complete a questionnaire. The major findings were: (1) most distance education institutions did not have a clear statement of policy, as perceived by their staff, on how to fulfill their roles as major distance education providers; (2) the institutions did not offer training for academic staff in the necessary skills for distance education; and (3) the institutions did not have a reward structure and career path for academics teaching in distance education. Nonetheless, it was found that, while distance education is perceived by practitioners to be on the periphery of higher education, it does flourish. To those involved in it, distance education has a vigor which is drawing them towards a new paradigm of teaching and learning. (4 references) (Author/GL)

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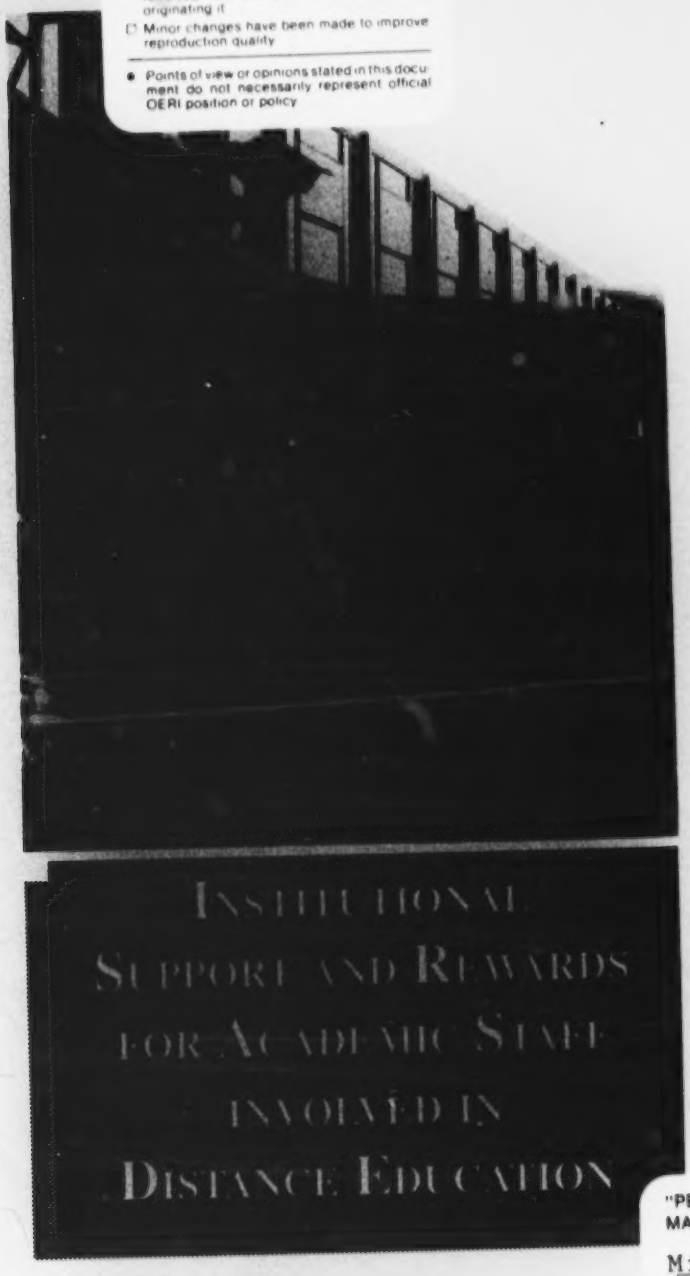

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CENTRE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

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Institutional Support and Rewards for Academic Staff Involved in Distance Education

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Institutional Support and Rewards for Academic Staff Involved in Distance Education

A Research Project supported and funded by the Research Committee of the International Council for Distance Education

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This report was presented at the Thirteenth World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education at Latrobe University, Melbourne, Australia, 13-20 August 1985.

Abstract

This project investigated among major providers of distance education their policy statements, the training given to academic staff to prepare them for distance education and the reward structure and career path for academics in distance education.

Seventy academic staff were interviewed from four institutions, two universities and two colleges, which were major providers of Distance Education in Australasia.

The major findings were:

most distance education institutions did not have a clear statement of policy on how to fulfil their role as major providers;

they did not offer training for academic staff in the necessary specialist skills;

and

they did not have a reward structure and career path for academics teaching in distance education.

Summary of Conclusions

This project sought information from a sample of academics and administrators working in distance education to try and identify -

(1) institutional policy as it related to distance education

(2) the rewards that academics perceived they received, or failed to receive, from participation in distance education.

Seventy individuals were questioned from four Australian institutions - two universities and two colleges of advanced education.

The major findings were as follows:

1. Most respondents became involved in distance education because it was part of the job, rather than through choice. However, a high proportion, 90%, including those with some reservations, now have positive attitudes to external study.

2. There was overwhelming agreement that satisfactory academic criteria could be met by distance education. A solid majority also said that the area was open to responsible academic pursuit.

3. There was considerable uncertainty by respondents as to whether either a stated or an unstated policy referring to involvement in distance education existed at their institutions. Just over half felt that both existed, but respondents were often unsure what the stated policy was and tended to be cynical about, or unable to articulate, that policy. There seemed little congruence between stated and operative policy.

4. Most were willing to read and research academic literature about distance education but time, direct relevance and easy accessibility were frequently conditional factors. No one was unwilling to participate in seminars/workshops - but willingness was often dependent on time and relevance. About a third of respondents were willing to participate unconditionally in each case.

5. Most respondents agreed that special skills were required for distance education teaching, particularly in relation to writing and structuring material, and in communicating with students. There was less certainty that professional development had been gained through involvement in distance education. Inability to separate the skills developed through internal and external teaching was often a problem.

6. Suggested opportunities for staff development focused on practitioner-centred activities and on the provision of training. The need for staff induction was frequently mentioned. Only a minority felt unconditionally that staff should be required to undertake formal staff development, although many were in favour of encouragement.

7. Very few believed that there were career advantages or institutional rewards for 'academics' in distance education compared to those for administrators. Respondents found it difficult to distinguish between academic and institutional rewards. Strong intrinsic rewards were reported, and nearly all believed that career advantages would make no difference 'now'.

The place and status of distance education on the periphery of tertiary education seem to be confirmed by the mixed, ambiguous, responses of academic staff to the questionnaire. On the one hand there is strong support for distance education, interest in it, commitment to and readiness to continue in the distance education mode. Further, there are indications of personal and professional growth through involvement in distance education. On the other hand responses to those questions focusing on career and rewards suggest that academic staff by and large do not see that their careers are linked with, or arise from, or are enhanced by participation in the distance education field.

This reservation is compounded by the ambiguity of responses about institutional policy. By and large the situation, as reflected in the responses, is that institutional statements of policy are not clear, that academic staff are not made aware of such policy and that induction of new staff to the policy and the expectations of the institutions is less than satisfactory. Nonetheless, the large number of responses that gave positive commitment to distance education suggests distance education is supported by academic staff.

This is further evident in responses to questions about staff development. The need for special skills to be effective in distance education is broadly recognised. However, academic staff do not develop such skills as a result of a deliberate policy with provision of staff development activity. Rather, the responses suggest that such development occurs as 'on the job' training. It should be further noted that while a significant number of respondents were sure that development had occurred, it was not clear how such development could be demonstrated.

Thus, it was concluded that institutions designated as major providers in distance education:

- did not have a clear statement of policy, as perceived by their staff, on how to fulfil their role as major distance education providers;
- did not offer training for academic staff in the different skills for distance education;
- did not have a reward structure and career path for academics which recognise the dimension of distance education.

Nonetheless it was found that, while distance education is perceived by practitioners to be on the periphery of tertiary education, it does flourish; and to those involved in it, distance education has a vigour which is drawing them towards a new paradigm of learning and teaching.

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Introduction

The researchers in this project began from a position that the academic in distance education should be seen as a pioneer in the development of a new educational paradigm. Distance education requires, the researchers assumed, not just changes in techniques, but changes in educational roles focused more on learning than teaching, in which students are required to pose questions, use resources, focus on projects, and negotiate criteria for their own evaluation. This was seen as different from the traditional academic paradigm where teaching has been controlled and the programs, examinations, and the educational process held within the hands of the academic. (Rogers 1980)

The researchers further assumed that academics who work in institutions in which there is distance education activity are often confronted with a central dilemma which leads to a degree of frustration. The basis of the dilemma is that distance education has been grafted onto the conventional educational system.

The researchers saw that distance education offers an opportunity to develop a student-centred paradigm in which learning is central; or at least requires a level of attention which it has not always received in tertiary institutions.

Three propositions crystalize this dilemma:

1. academics in distance education have been socialised into the conventional paradigm. Thus, they have not had the opportunity to observe models and colleagues experienced in a different paradigm; and the norms and skills which an academic has learnt are not necessarily appropriate to the distance education paradigm. (Bradley 1978)

2. for academics who participate in distance education, it is difficult to build up a commitment to the paradigm: loyalties and responsibilities lie elsewhere; namely with a discipline, research and related professional bodies. (Bradley 1978)

3. the onus is usually placed on the proponents of distance education to justify and demonstrate that it is not a second rate alternative to the dominant paradigm of face-to-face contact, manifest in lectures and tutorials.

In sum, there appears no 'culture' of established norms, skills and rewards for distance education, or at best there is only a nascent 'culture' of distance education with established norms, skills and rewards.

It is in this context that academics who participate in distance education activity are confronted with a number of particular problems that have rarely been addressed. Rather the growing accumulation of data in the field of distance education is focused on the performance, attitudes and study methods of students, on study centres, and improvement of study materials. The researchers involved in this project saw that an equally important, but less frequently examined area is the policy of the institutions towards distance education and the rewards they offered to their academics who teach in the external mode.

There has been a gradual change in teaching methods in the past generation which is well documented and which shows a move away from large lectures to tutorials, small group methods, and self-paced independent learning. Academics have been party to these innovations. The widespread acceptance of lifelong learning with its consequence of mature-age students returning to tertiary study has also caused some academics to adjust their teaching strategies. However, the adjustments to academics' teaching methods over this generation are quite insignificant when compared to the radical change required by the off-campus mode where communication with students is at a distance and not face-to-face. The issue is often further confused when an academic has responsibility to teach the same course both on-campus and off-campus. The natural tendency is to spend greater energy and time with the on-campus students and use the same methods to teach on- and off-campus students. It is not uncommon for a lecturer with 70 on-campus students and 200 off-campus students to spend two-thirds or more of his time with the on-campus students. (Knowles 1979)

Several broad questions need to be explored about the goals of an institution that is required to participate in distance education. In Australasia distance education seems to have arisen historically to allow many institutions to serve students across vast distances. In some cases entry to distance education may have been seen as a means of survival rather than a preferred mode of study.

From the experience of the researchers there does appear to be a commitment in these distance education institutions to provide resources and support staff in such areas as administration, production, printing, editing and despatch. The willingness of such support staff to participate in distance education and see a special career path with growing openings has provided the general membership of the Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association (ASPESA).

However, our own experience shows that dilemmas, conflicts, frustrations and uneasiness are evident in academics who work in institutions which serve both on and off-campus students. The sources of these problems appear to be related to the following factors:

1. The need for detailed preparation of study guides and lecture notes in advance. This is done without the stimulus of interaction with classroom students; it is a new experience for individual lecturers.

2. Lecturers have their teaching methods and content open for peer comment and criticisms in a written form. Traditionally, they were masters in the classrooms and resented as intruders anyone but students who entered their classes.

3. Academics have been used to working alone; and when course teams are used for preparation of material, little attention has been given to the development of skills for interpersonal communication. This is essential if there is to be mutual support to enhance and not diminish the quality of the intellectual output.

4. The lack of detailed institutional policy to clarify that external studies is a major part of the educational philosophy of the institution. Under such circumstances, academics tend to fall back on familiar modes. (Bradley 1978). Thus, the tenuous situation of distance education is reinforced and retards the development of a different paradigm.

5. A lack of attention to the process of career path and reward structure for participants in distance education. Senior staff often do not recognise writing for external students to be equivalent to teaching and consequently it is not given weight for promotion and tenure.

6. The role of external studies in the institution which, at times, has grown as a pragmatic means of holding student numbers and maintaining financial viability. While institutions welcome such public designations as 'major provider' they have rarely followed through with detailed guidelines of support and resources to do the job adequately.

7. The lack of clarity about how best to teach off-campus and what support and resources to offer academic staff. The first tendency is to utilise on-campus strategies, such as weekend schools, as a substitute for alternative means of communicating with distance students, such as a dependence. Some suggestions that appear to be valuable can be counter-productive: for example, giving academics time off from on-campus teaching to write study guides can place the lecturer in a vacuum where stimulation dries up and good creative writing just does not flow. Not all would react this way, for some individuals and some environments have made this a productive way to prepare study material.

8. The confusion with which many academics respond to external studies because they thrive on the intellectual exchange with students, but are quite lost with the extended isolation from their students. It is easy to understand how academics teaching on- and off-campus postpone the writing of study guides until the last moment when they are put under great time pressure and may produce sub-standard academic work.

9. The limited research and development work in distance education that is applicable to the teaching of courses for external students.

10. The lack of a clear agreed path for the support of academics involved in distance education. For example, in some institutions assistance is given to academics in areas that cover course design, pre-counselling of external students, use of market survey data-collecting mechanisms, identifying students' characteristics and profiles, textual design, in-text questions, writing courses around assignments, model answers, telephone tutoring and weekend schools. Other institutions have sought solutions by giving time off to write, budgeting for consultants, gaining formative evaluation feedback, purchasing similar material from other institutions, building external teaching skills into the promotional structure, granting professional experience leave to develop these skills, and so on. In spite of the many attempts at support a number of deep dilemmas, frustrations and critical questions remain.

Thus, this project sought information from a sample of academic and administrative staff across four institutions, to try and identify their perceptions of conflict, reward, failure and support in relation to their institutions. It was hoped that some suggestions to overcome apparent dilemmas and frustrations would emerge.

This project sought to test and explore the assumption that distance education will remain on the periphery of tertiary education until those institutions designated as major providers -

(a) have clear statements of policy as to how they will fulfil their role of a major provider in distance education;

(b) give training for academic staff in the different skills required for distance education; and

(c) develop a reward structure and career path for academics which recognises the dimensions of distance education.

Methodology

Data was collected from four institutions which are major providers of distance education in Australia and New Zealand.

A sample of full-time academic teaching staff from senior tutor upwards, together with senior members of general staff, was selected on a stratified basis according to the following criteria:

1. representation from all schools or faculties.

2. inclusion of at least 15 per cent of academics who do not participate in distance education, but who work in distance education institutions.

3. representation of staff members whose length of time in distance education covered from one to fourteen years.

4. proportional representation according to sex.

A questionnaire was developed to collect data for presentation on a three by four matrix which displayed three themes, and four roles of staff in relation to these themes. The themes were:

(a) Policy
(b) Staff Development
(c) Career/reward

Development of the Questionnaire

Each question was to have a specific purpose related to the themes of the study. The study was to focus on three aspects of institutional function - policy, staff development, career and rewards. Hence, a balanced questionnaire would include a similar weighting of questions in each of these areas.

However, some guiding structure was needed to ensure that questions in each area were systematic and theoretically consistent. Individuals in the institutions surveyed were frequently reported to act in at least three major roles, personal, academic and professional, and these roles provided a theoretical structure. Hence, a three by three matrix emerged with policy, development and career/rewards as one set of dimensions and personal, academic and professional as the other. In order to give individuals full opportunity to make evaluative and normative comments, a fourth dimension of seven cells was added.

The matrix format had two further advantages apart from internal consistency as discussed above. Firstly, it provided a manageable format for presenting summaries of the information gathered from each individual on a single sheet. Secondly, when compiled it became possible to extract 'profiles' on specific topics, e.g. an individual's complete responses on policy or development could be extracted on the vertical grid or academic concerns on the horizontal grid.

Following the trial of the questionnaire at Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, and after consultation with Professor Urban Dahloff of the University of Uppsala, while he was at Gippsland Institute, we confirmed that:

The distinctions were valid and meaningful on one dimension between:

* policy
* development
* career and reward

and on the other dimension, the distinctions were justified between roles which were designated:

* personal
* professional
* academic
* evaluative

Thus, a protocol grid was developed to include the following items from the questionnaire. The actual questions are given below:

	Policy	Development	Career & Reward
Personal	1,2a, 2b,4	7	20
Academic	10,11	12,14	21,23
Professional	3,5,6	13,15	19,22
Evaluative	8,9	16,17,18	24,25

Policy

Personal

1. What is your personal attitude towards tertiary study by external mode?

2a. How did you get into distance education?

2b. Are you pleased, indifferent, displeased about getting into, and being in, distance education?

4. In what way were you made aware of your institution's stated policy on distance education when you were appointed?

Academic

10. Do you think satisfactory academic criteria can be met by distance education?

11. Would you regard the area of distance education to be an area open to responsible academic pursuit?

Professional

3. Does your institution have a stated policy about its involvement in distance education? How would you describe it?

5. Does your institution have an unstated but operative policy on distance education? How would you describe it?

6. How does you own viewpoint on distance education fit in with that of your institution?

Evaluative	8.	What do you think your institution's policy on distance education ought to be?
	9.	Do you think your institution is effective in accomplishing its distance education goals?

Development

Personal	7.	Has your viewpoint on distance education changed at all since joining this institution? How, and by what?
Academic	12.	Would you be interested to read available research and academic literature on distance education?
	14.	Would you participate in seminars and workshops on distance education if they were provided by your institution?
Professional	13.	Would you say that any special skills are required for teaching in distance education courses?
	15.	Have you gained any professional development (teaching/learning etc.) from involvement in distance education?
Evaluative	16.	What opportunities for staff development in distance education, if any, should be available in your institution?
	17.	If there was a suitable qualification readily available, e.g. Diploma in Distance Education, would you consider taking it?
	18.	Do you think staff involved in distance education programs should be required to undertake formal staff development?

Career and Reward Aspects of Distance Education

Personal	20.	If there were definite career advantages for becoming involved in distance education, would it make any difference to you now?
Academic	21.	Would your standing as an academic be advantaged by extensive involvement in distance education? Disadvantaged? No different?
	23.	If you had to opt between 'academic' rewards and 'institutional' rewards for involvement in distance education, which would you choose?
Professional	19.	Are there any career advantages for those who become involved in distance education in your institution?
	22.	Does your institution reward those involved in distance education? If so, how?
Evaluative	24.	Ought your institution reward you differently for involvement with distance education than for conventional teaching and research?
	25.	Is there anything else you would like to say about distance education?

Implementation of the Project

Following preparation of this grid, a questionnaire booklet was designed and distributed. This was to accompany a taped audio interview of academic staff from two major providers of university courses and two major providers of advanced education courses. The numbers interviewed from each institution were:

Deakin University	14
Gippsland Institute	25
South Australian College of Advanced Education	6
Massey University	25

These interviews were then written up on the protocol grid and each cluster analysed to include:

1. a quantification of responses
2. pertinent quotations
3. a summary of the general disposition of responses
4. an assessment of whether one cluster linked closely to another cluster.

Results

Section One: Policy Aspects of Distance Education

A. Personal

1. Question 1

What is your personal attitude towards tertiary study by external mode?

	No. of Respondents	%
Strongly positive	28	40.0
Positive	23	32.9
Positive with reservations	11	15.7
Undecided/indifferent	6	8.6
Negative	1	1.4
No response	1	1.4
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Positive

* It's been fulfilling a very important function.
* It's part of an open education system.
* Interesting, enthusiastic, hardworking people to teach.
* I find it very challenging.
* Highly desirable and effective method of making tertiary education available.
* Excellent mode of study.

With Reservations

* In a word - difficult.
* Probably necessary, but very difficult for the student.
* Grave reservations as to how it's applied.
* If it doesn't affect the quality of the final. I think it is good.
* Cautiously positive - need to be careful about standards.

Undecided/Indifferent

* It cannot provide the same standards of instruction, resources and opportunities.
* It's not the kind of teaching I enjoy most.

Summary:

Only one respondent had completely negative feelings. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents had positive attitudes generally relating to open access and/or stimulation of working with mature students.

2. Question 2a

How did you get into distance education?

	No. of Respondents	%
Part of the Job	47	67.1
Post appointment	5	7.2
Interest	12	17.2
Didn't know/not really involved	2	2.8
No response	4	5.7
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Part of the Job

* Entered with fairly 'open' eyes.
* It became part of the fashion.
* I had no choice.
* We grew into it.
* Didn't know what I was letting myself in for.
* Offered a job which involved external teaching.
* Simply because I joined the establishment.
* I happened to take a job at the institute and it was part of the job.

Post Appointment

* A departmental job that was parcelled out to staff.
* Here before it began.

Interest

* External Studies was one of the things that attracted me.
* Had been involved in External Studies of University of London; applied for the job.
* A deliberate policy on own part to join.

Summary:

Most respondents became involved in distance education because it went with the job. A corollary is that there has been a great deal of 'on the job' training.

The high response rate of 72.9% with positive attitudes (Q.1) is noteworthy.

3. Question 2b

Are you pleased, indifferent, displeased about getting into, and being in, distance education?

	No. of Respondents	%
Pleased	36	51.4
Indifferent	3	4.3
No response	19	27.2
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Pleased

* Pleased after initial apprehension.
* Very positive, students are great.
* Enjoy it immensely - would like to teach externals exclusively.
* It's rewarding but very time consuming.
* It's a helluva workload, and limits my research time, but it's great.
* Positive despite the difficulties.
* Very exciting to work on the study material.
* Very pleased and satisfied.
* It's a great thing to be able to provide for people who need it.
* Very enjoyable and challenging.
* It's a teaching experience you've got to go through to know what it's all about.

Indifferent

* Mixture of pleased and displeased.
* Wish I'd had more information on commitment required when I was appointed.
* Could be either way - I quite like it.

Summary:

Not one respondent was totally displeased with distance method per se. Displeasure was linked with lack of resources, initial skills, ignorance of field.

Almost all were pleased, or mildly pleased, and some very pleased ('enormous pleasure'). Some pleasure arose from working with mature students.

The challenge is enjoyable, and experience increases satisfaction.

4. Question 4

In what way were you made aware of your institution's stated policy on distance education when you were appointed?

		No. of Respondents	%
*	Discussed at interview	13	18.6
*	Post employment, through participation in institution's affairs; i.e. employment pre-dated introduction of distance education.	12	17.1
*	Not made aware of it	9	12.9
*	Informed distance education a condition of employment, usually in material sent	10	14.3
*	Through advertisement/publicity	7	10.0
*	Had prior knowledge of the institution	4	5.7
*	Not informed: "never really laid out - no specification of responsibilities either as internal or external teacher"	2	2.8
*	Through the Department Head and procedures	1	1.4
*	Acquired as much information as possible on institution	1	1.4
*	"Told point blank"	1	1.4
*	Experience as a student gave knowledge of the institution	1	1.4
*	Not applicable	9	12.9
		70	100.0

Summary:

The one thing clear was that there was no standard way used to provide such information.

It should be noted that a relatively large number of respondents 'grew into' distance education as institutions changed.

B. Academic

5. Question 10

Do you think satisfactory academic criteria can be met by Distance Education?

	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	37	52.9
Qualified	29	41.4
No	3	4.3
No response	1	1.4
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Yes

* Yes, if you relate it to subjects being taught.
* Provided student is 'well aligned' to distance education.

Qualified

* The criteria of external use of library just isn't met at all.
* Yes, but some on-campus contact is needed.
* The practical work is difficult to be done externally.
* Yes, but not as easily as if there was personal contact.
* Yes, but only in certain areas....suspicious of courses which are not much more than guided reading sessions.
* ....some limitations in science, particularly with the laboratory courses.
* Yes, but I don't think you are ever going to get quite the same sort of education from a distance mode.
* Not enough interaction between students.

Summary:

(a) Strong agreement.

(b) Qualifications of two kinds, namely:

there is need for face-to-face contact between teacher and students;

and some courses have different needs, such as laboratory experiments.

6. Question 11

Would you regard the area of distance education to be an area open to responsible academic pursuit?

	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	44	62.8
Qualified	13	18.6
Uncertain	7	10.0
No	3	4.3
No response	3	4.3
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Yes

* Yes, but it doesn't have the same status as other areas.
* Yes, it's a fairly new area and all sorts of questions need investigation.
* Yes, it involves different teaching methods.
* To some extent; need for ongoing statistical study of performance rates and teaching methods.
* Certainly; it's probably an area that hasn't been promoted amongst its own academics as such.
* Yes; like to see research on:

  a) connection between quality of material and learning process
  b) motivation
  c) isolation problems.

Qualified

* Not sure whether it's a discipline on its own.
* I don't know; I'm not inclined to think tertiary teaching methods are ever going to be an area of solid research.

No

No. Not of itself; yes, if you related it to subjects being taught.

Summary:

a) A majority believed research could be undertaken.
b) Only a few respondents specified areas/topics for research.
c) Few indicated they are engaged or would engage in such research.
d) Some respondents thought the question related to opportunities for students to engage in research, which they supported.

C. Professional

7. Question 3

Does your institution have a stated policy about its involvement in distance education? How would you describe it?

	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	38	54.3
Uncertain/equivocal	26	37.2
No	4	5.7
No response	2	2.8
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Yes

* Obsessional.
* Raison d'etre; covertly distance education has to battle along with everything else.
* Very much a part of the institute's planning; but have never read a stated policy.
* Appears to be one of expansion in that direction.
* That we will offer as large a range of opportunities as possible.

Uncertain

* If it has one, it's not stated with a great deal of vigour.
* I presume it does have a policy, but I've never heard it stated.
* Distinction between policy and attitude; proper policy and implications not stated.
* A policy as such I'm not aware of; I'm more concerned as a teacher; I'm not an administrator.

Summary:

There was a distinction drawn between stated and written policy. Many respondents were sure there was a stated policy which was rarely written, or clearly available. A number of respondents indicated they were unaware of any stated policy.

8. Question 5

Does your institution have an unstated but operative policy on distance education? How would you describe this unstated policy?

	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	31	44.3
Uncertain/equivocal	25	35.7
No	3	4.3
No response	11	15.7
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Yes

* Fluctuates from time to time but to have the largest number of students that is economically viable.
* I don't think there are any undertones which are unknown.
* Pragmatic one - to get students.
  Was haphazard, but now sees the function as regional.
* Distance education is seen very much by the institute as an extra.
* External students will be treated the same as internal students.
* If you're involved in a department which offers extramural studies you are expected to take part.

Uncertain

* That teaching staff are sort of protected from external students.
* Policy differs between the teaching teams and academic registrar. There seems to be very, very limited intercourse between the two.
* Not capable of perceiving it.

Summary:

There was a measure of cynicism that unstated policy was to boost student numbers on the cheap; many respondents had difficulty in articulating the policy. There seemed little congruence between stated and operative policy, leaving the inference that the policy is not clearly thought out.

9. Question 6

How does your own viewpoint on distance education fits in with that of your institution?

		No. of Respondents	%
*	Fits well	32	45.7
*	Fits well, supports institution's policy but wants changes	7	10.0
*	By inference, fits well	6	8.6
*	Response unclear	3	4.3
*	Does not fit at all	2	2.9
*	By inference, does not fit well - holds more positive approach	3	4.3
*	Accept as something that must be done	1	1.4
*	Fits well with department rather than institution	1	1.4
*	No response	15	21.4
		70	100.0

Summary:

Most respondents saw their viewpoint as fitting well with that of the institution.

A considerable number of those whose viewpoint fitted well nevertheless used qualifiers, including a number who saw themselves as more committed, keener, wanting to go further, than the institution.

A number of respondents expressed concern about inadequate resources.

D. Evaluative

10. Question 8

What do you think your institution's policy on distance education ought to be?

		No. of Respondents	%
*	The institution should do more: refine organisation; promote internally for acceptance, encourage; plan better with clearer goals; provide more teachers, better material, more centres; develop methods of communication	26	37.1
*	Not unhappy: basic policy pretty right, with balance between distance education and internal teaching	17	24.3
*	Should be flexible in what's offered	3	4.3
*	Encourage the appropriate quality	3	4.3
*	Be more selective in courses offered	2	2.9
*	Aim to be the best	1	1.4
*	Provide more detailed statements of appropriate client services	1	1.4
*	Widen techniques into broadcasting	1	1.4
*	Develop the special entry program	2	2.9
*	Maintain the educational integrity of what's offered	1	1.4
*	Not for me to answer	1	1.4
*	It ought to be overhauled from the beginning	1	1.4
*	Maintain distance education as a viable means of boosting student numbers	1	1.4
*	No comment; no possible changes	2	2.9
*	No response	8	11.4
		70	100.0

Summary:

a) Responses were individual.

b) The major pattern of responses suggested the need to provide more, ie. to enhance in various ways what was being done. This correlates highly with respondents who saw a good fit with institution's policy.

11. Question 9

Do you think your institution is effective in achieving its distance education goals?

	No. of Respondents	%
Effective	54	77.1
Equivocal	12	17.1
Not effective	4	5.7
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Effective

* Yes, our external pass rate is higher than our internals.
* Yes, if measured by degrees, but external students miss a lot.
* Yes, but only because of the goodwill of our students.
* We do as good a job as we can do.
* Students value it, comment positively and are always eager for more.
* Frustration has done a fantastic job.
* From hearsay yes, but there is no real evidence.
* Yes, but only through sheer dedication beyond what is reasonable by people in external teaching.
* Yes, our graduates get favourable comment.
* Yes, very, for those who can adapt.
* Yes, we are respected for what we do.
* Some very successful and spectacular accomplishments, but some dismal failures, e.g. drop-out rate.

Equivocal

* Our universities don't regard external degrees as serious.
* Not sure what the goals are, not sure how to judge.
* Great variability and no real monitoring system.
* Limitations on resources reduce our effectiveness.
* OK, but a long way to go in developing systems for more distance students.
* Successful in getting students started but not good at maintaining them.
* OK, but goals not clear.

Not effective

* In my area 85% drop-out.
* Other people's courses are inadequate.
* Not suited to my subject (Engineering).

Summary

Less than one in ten reported their institution as not effective, and three out of four reported effective or very effective. Many had problems with lack of formal evaluation/criteria/goals etc. but felt that their institution was effective. The evidence is in the students' response. Concerns were expressed about the drop-out rate, heavy demands on willing staff, lack of resources etc.

Section Two: Development Aspects of Distance Education

A. Personal

12. Question 7

Has your viewpoint on Distance Education changed at all since joining this institution? How, and by what?

	No. of Respondents	%
Changed	44	62.9
Equivocal	7	10.0
Not changed	12	17.1
No comment	6	8.6
No response	1	1.4
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Yes

* Growth with external studies; you see how it can work and where it clearly doesn't.
* Evolved rather than changed radically; always thought it fairly difficult, but a little more confident that one can make a true contribution. Few rewards other than personal.
* Learnt a great deal about it, greater appreciation of teaching and learning in external studies. Originally expressed it as correspondence education.
* Developed over time - appreciation of needs and technical aspects of distance education.
* Became more positive, more aware of new techniques, more educated about extramural teaching.
* Previously thought it like correspondence teaching; after involvement, more excited, interested and aware of students' problems.
* Much more positive; 'chore' side is less and rewards have increased.
* Uninformed previously; increasing interest and acceptance of it as legitimate and necessary.
* One sees techniques to make the seemingly impossible quite feasible.
* More confirmed it is an appropriate form of mid-career study for those with tertiary training - more successful for these.
* More positive; difficulties can be overcome more easily than initially thought. Advantages far outweigh disadvantages.
* At first rejected it - strained and false kind of interchange. Once tried to find new ways of teaching because of student interchange.
* Much more in favour of it.
* More aware of:
  - difficulties - need to keep in touch with students.
  - using technological change to develop new avenues for teaching

Equivocal

* Personal view has not changed greatly; question in everybody's mind about just how successful we are at it.
* Viewpoint about existence unchanged; understanding of complications has.
* Only in growth of awareness about how it is done.
* Unchanged, but have accepted some of the difficulties in teaching distance education that I initially glossed over.
* Changed in detail but not in principle.

Not changed

* Still think it's important.
* Always a great supporter.
* Still in favour of it.
* Always committed to it.

Summary:

The viewpoint of nearly two-thirds of respondents had changed, usually because of experience, as awareness about the complexities of distance education increased. The change was particularly positive for Massey respondents.

The views of a further 10 per cent had 'changed in detail but not in principle'. Those whose views were unchanged tended to have been 'always in favour of it'.

B. Academic

13. Question 12

Would you be interested to read available research and academic literature on distance education?

	No. of Respondents	%
Unqualified 'yes'	27	38.6
Qualified 'yes'	32	45.7
Low priority	5	7.1
No	2	2.8
No comment	3	4.3
No response	1	1.4
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Unqualified 'yes'

* Very much so.
* Already do.
* Lot of interest in what others say but pool is so small you hear the same things over and over
* Particularly in relation to difficulties in teaching the extramural. Am open for more experiences of others teaching at a distance.
* A good thing - we need to share experience and knowhow.
* Occasionally read, but would like to see a bit more readily available.
* Certainly - anxious to read material on field.

Qualified 'yes'

* Dependent on time availability.
* Only in improving my teaching; wouldn't like to get bogged down in research I couldn't see immediate application for.
* Provided it was readily available; not going to great lengths to seek out research.
* If time was available to do so; debatable if reading in pedagogy is useful - you tend to assimilate it over the years.
* If they were devoted to areas relevant to me.
* If it was stimulating and appropriate to what I was doing.
* Provided I understood what it was about and it addressed my area of study; question of priorities always an issue.
* Time allowing.

* Dependent on its orientation - less interested in information on role of course developers than effectiveness of teaching/learning in distance education
* ...would not make it a whole, consuming interest.
* Given appropriate time commitments.
* Only if relevant and of good quality.

Low Priority

* Find it very difficult to keep up with literature in my own field, and external studies is a very small part of my teaching load.
* ...more interested in reading summaries put together by people who understand the overall picture than wading through literature.
* Low on my priority list.
* Don't see myself working in distance education; would read material forwarded but not actively seek it.

Summary:

Most were interested to read, but more than half of these attached conditions to their readiness. In particular the need for time, direct relevance and easy accessibility of material was applicable to many of the 'qualified' and 'low priority' responses. A prior commitment to subject areas was an issue for several.

The 'unqualified', affirmative responses showed interest, openness, and recognition of the need for exchange of information in the field.

14. Question 14

Would you participate in seminars and workshops on distance education if they were provided by your institution?

	No. of Respondents	%
Unqualified 'yes'	24	34.3
Qualified 'yes'	43	61.4
No comment	3	4.3
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Unqualified 'yes'

* Definitely - a most worthwhile opportunity - should not be a one-off.
* I'd be happy to do that as it's going to be a high component in the job.
* Would like to see a program fully structured, rather than ad hoc seminars.
* Already do; I've been involved in at least half the ones running over the last year or two.
* I'm responsible for putting them on.
* I like it - very stimulating.
* I would find them useful.

Qualified 'yes'

* Only if it contributes in own area.
* Topic dependent; those in the past have been too general.
* If I saw it was relevant.
* Time constraints.
* Time and priority dependent.
* Depends on their aim - if to highlight problems and share knowledge - yes.
* Next year - not this year - I'm too busy.
* If it appeared relevant to our own field.
* Dependent on actual seminar content and own needs.
* Time always a problem, good to get together and look at new trends in distance education.
* Top class seminars essential, must be presented in enthusiastic and motivating manner for me to attend. Time an important factor.
* Depending on time constraints.
* Not in own time, should have "'in-service training'.

Summary:

No one was unwilling to participate in seminars and workshops on distance education. About one-third of respondents gave unqualified affirmative responses, the other two-thirds indicating that their participation would be conditional - mainly on relevance and time.

Gippsland had the highest proportion of unqualified responses (50%) and relevance was the main conditional factor. Massey had the highest proportion of conditional responses (80%) followed by S.A.C.A.E. (67%), and time was mentioned as an inhibiting factor most frequently by these respondents.

C. Professional

15. Question 13

Would you say that any special skills are required for teaching in Distance Education courses?

	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	60	85.7
Equivocal	8	11.4
No comment	1	1.4
No response	1	1.4
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Yes

* Basically related to preparation of course material - written and audio-visual.
* Have to be able to write better - much more structured than lectures.
* Heightened communication and 'scholastic empathy' - being in touch through written work and sensing problems with coping.
* Have to be sympathetic; copious comments and feedback important; ensure that time spent well while externals are with you.
* Not quite sure what they are - patience, guts, perseverance, very demanding role; skill of communication.
* People who are hard-working, main requirement; who can work on their own without a lot of contact - marking assignments, writing study guides.
* Only skill is to write a good, readable, legible study guide.
* Subtle differences in preparing material (concise but conversational so it appears someone is interested).
* Empathy with needs and problems of students; very good skill at written communication.
* Patience, different administrative skills, different attitudes.
* Organising material in an educationally effective way - an eye for clarity of expression.
* Communication skills - special effort for external students.
* Skills important but not as important as appropriate attitude.
* Written skills vital - formal yet informal to develop student interest.
* Written skills, administrative skills, patience, perseverance.

Equivocal

* Don't think they are special skills, rather different skills, more emphasis on writing than verbal and oral abilities.
* Commitment and willingness rather than special skills: obviously some skills are required but don't know if they greatly differ from those of any academic discipline.
* General skills which are transferred from internal teaching.

* Skills from internal teaching; have to learn to structure material and tailor specifically to external students.
* Not really; no different from teaching other courses.

Summary:

It was generally agreed that special skills are required for teaching externally. Those who demurred tended to recognise the different requirements, but deny that the skills are 'special'.

Comments related mainly to the skills involved in writing and structuring material for external students, emphasising the communication skills and 'empathy' required in working with them. Frequent reference was made to necessary personal characteristics of external teachers, such as patience, perseverance, sympathy, commitment and administrative ability.

16. Question 15

Have you gained any professional development (teaching/learning, etc.) from involvement in distance education?

	No. of Respondents	%
Unqualified yes	35	50.0
Qualified yes	9	12.9
Uncertain	7	10.0
No	10	14.3
No comment	8	11.4
No response	1	1.4
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Unqualified 'yes'

* Certainly - internal teaching has gained significantly; improved communication skills by developing awareness of need for effective communication in distance education.
* Helps you think about educational process more than face-to-face contact; helps you understand your own discipline.
* No doubt about it - a very rewarding experience; learn a great deal about your subject.
* Curriculum development type skills - more conscious of course objectives.
* Become a better teacher; more aware of learning problems of students.
* Written skills improved 'something fantastic'.
* Absolutely no question, development in general educational principles and interest - has helped in preparation of internal classes.
* Decidedly so; made contact with many disciplines and as a consultant - very enriching.
* Learnt a lot informally - better equipped to teach at a distance.
* Learnt to write more clearly and communicate more effectively.
* Particularly from staff development seminars.
* Most certainly - learnt far more than I've taught.
* Become more objective of some things taken for granted in internal mode.
* Learnt a great deal from own experience and informal sessions with students.

Qualified 'yes'

* I think so in a haphazard way - picked up by association with local people responsible for coordinating external services.
  Picked up en route rather than systematically planned.
* Only in developing and preparing external materials.
* Hard to say, but I believe so; organisation of internal lectures a bit better as a result of writing study guides.

Uncertain

* A very small amount if at all.
* Cannot separate particular development as I teach both internally and externally, and always have.
* How does one increase this? Not aware of any from extramural studies alone.
* Haven't gained any professional standing in New Zealand; what I write now is more publishable than five years ago.

No

* But have gained some satisfaction.
* Haven't gained anything much more than if I were only concerned with internal teaching.
* Communication skills for distance education already developed - extension of skills I've already got.

Summary:

Half the respondents unconditionally accepted that they had gained professionally from their involvement in distance education and some were very definite that they had. Including qualified responses ("I think I have"), about two-thirds (62.9%) answered positively. The general feeling was that the development of writing, organisational and inter-personal skills increased awareness of educational processes which were relevant to other teaching modes.

About a quarter (24.3%) of respondents were uncertain or felt they had not gained professionally, often because they could not separate the skills involved in distance education from those of internal teaching.

D. Evaluative

17. Question 16

What opportunities for staff development in Distance Education, if any, ought to be available in your institution?

Main Categories of Response	No of Respondents
Extra-institutional discussion, seminars, workshops	11
Staff induction	10
Time	10
Assistance/training in development of study material	9
In-service (teacher) training	8
Study leave, visits, work in similar institutions	7
Professional assistance	6
Conferences and seminars	4
Training in new technology	3
Self-education opportunities	2

Selected Comments:

* Clear policy for consistent team meetings held very regularly - teaching practice major subject of discussion.
* Staff interaction, discussing material preparation.
* Time off to write and rewrite courses over a six month period - got to become part of our work, a full-time exercise.
* More time for planning - meeting together to go over the details.
* Send staff to other centres in Victoria and other states - constant interchange with other external centres.
* Require new staff to undergo 4-5 day seminar on writing study guides.
* Voluntary staff development programme...for people with no experience of extramural teaching.
* Would like to know about actual processes involved in producing study material.
* Some micro-teaching situations, e.g. video, mock-up situations for new and experienced teachers to develop teaching consciousness.
* Separate facilities for full-time academic staff, wholly committed to distance education.
* Highly skilled personnel to advise on new technology.
* Workshops on writing and methodologies of teaching.
* Staff induction essential - extended procedure.
* Shouldn't be any - you learn on the job.
* Proper in-service training for up to a couple of weeks.
* Professional educational programs, workshops and defined career field - specialist education in the distance mode.
* Time for reading and planning.

Summary:

Two main forms of staff development were suggested:

Firstly, the practitioner-centred form focused on opportunities for development through such activities as discussion, seminars workshops, visits, study leave and self-education.

The second form emphasised the importance of professional assistance in training, especially of new staff, but also in relation to the development of study materials, teaching skills and new technology. Time was frequently mentioned as essential for staff development.

Other general comments suggested that opportunities were already available, a few indicating that they should be increased.

18. Question 17

If there was a suitable qualification readily available such as a Diploma in Distance Education, would you consider taking it?

	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	3	4.3
Conditional	20	28.6
Doubtful/No	45	64.3
No comment	2	2.9
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Yes

* Formal course would perhaps force me to give it close attention.
* Have made enrolment enquiries at S.A. College.

Conditional

* Would have to look at course according to my personal and professional need.
* Depend a lot on course - not for sake of diploma. Formalisation may give credibility to distance education - value in serious academic pursuit. Need for course content that would attract people.
* Only if it can be carried out by distance education methods.
* Depends on workload. Training should be available on in-service basis - time should be provided.
* Have to assess content and aims. In favour of a course with a lot of structured knowledge. Less inclined if just to get a piece of paper.
* Pity if it were a pre-requisite for external teaching. OK for complete newcomers to the field.
* Only if it did not interfere with other commitments.
* But may take it if it emphasises techniques of material presentation.
* Perhaps - good in principle but uncertain whether necessary or desirable.
* Time dependent.
* Consider in long term if external mode became a firm career path.
* Time dependent; prepared to study single subjects.

Doubtful/No

* I'm in the latter third of my teaching career and am not looking for specialist qualification.
* But valuable for younger members of staff.
* Don't think so - interested in a distance education project but not a qualification.
* May be desirable but can probably do just as well by developing experience and expertise. No personal need for further formal course structure.

* Has to be learnt on job. Can't read about it and learn about it without doing it.
* Had enough of formal study, but fruitful for people starting off on a career with external students.
* More interested in knowing what to do than gaining qualifications.
* Not now - perhaps 10-15 years ago would have considered it.
* Too old to worry about that now.
* Rather spend spare time in subject related research.
* Not prepared to increase my workload for a course I couldn't totally utilise.
* Not attractive to 'senior lecturer'; perhaps more relevant/attractive to younger academic.
* Short term practical course more relevant.
* Teaching it would be more appropriate. Will be contributing to Masters in Distance Education at Deakin.
* Interesting but time factor would prevent commitment.
* Unlikely - views of early retirement.
* No time.

Summary:

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64.3%) were unwilling or unlikely to consider taking a qualification in distance education, many because they felt they were too far advanced in their careers to undertake further formal study. Readiness to undertake short courses or projects was mentioned by some, but others felt knowledge could only be gained on the job. Lack of time, and unwillingness to increase workloads for limited gain, compared to subject-related research, were further deterrents.

About a third (32.9%) were willing to consider taking a qualification but relevance, career prospects, time, and other commitments, were conditional factors.

19. Question 18

Do you think staff involved in Distance Education programs should be required to undertake formal staff development?

	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	14	20.0
Conditional	24	34.3
No	30	42.9
No comment	2	2.9
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Yes

* Obviously necessary.
* Should be compulsory.
* Could only improve presentation of selves and courses.
* Essential but time needs to be provided by institute.
* Believe that about staff involved in general education too. Strongly believe it should be a requirement.
* Should be part of professional commitment provided by institute rather than in 'own' time.

Conditional

* Yes to some sort; No to formal staff development. Something should be available to let people know difference between distance education and classroom teaching.
* Yes, but not a program which everyone had to do - depends on individual need.
* Not unless it's part of job.
* Yes, but not much point until proper policies are formulated.
* Yes, but not across the board; if difficulties in preparation, then needed. Must be considered for new staff.
* Cannot require formal staff development in this area alone - good for orientation of new staff.
* No more than staff involved in internal teaching.
* Only if stipulated as a condition of employment.
* Not unless formal requirement for teaching training.
* Only if clearly defined time set aside.
* Must be some recognition of why there is a requirement.
* If no previous experience.
* Yes in principle, but encouragement more appropriate.

No

* Not right approach - encouragement important.
* Encouragement and opportunity but not enforcement.
* Wide range of people; formal staff development would limit scope and flexibility.
* Should be *encouraged*; programs and time should be available for staff.
* Cutting your own throat; not sure that distance education requires something special.
* Not when they have a substantial commitment to meet with internal students.
* Should not be compelled; benefits in short-term, in-house, 'hands on'.
* No - but should be motivation so academics want to be involved in such programs.
* Not compatible with spirit of distance education - encouragement important.

Summary:

Only a fifth of all respondents agreed definitely that formal staff development should be a requirement, and some of these specified that time must be provided by the institution. Including conditional responses, just over half (54.3%) supported required staff development in some situations, with 42.9 per cent opposing it.

There was considerable resistance to the term 'required': most respondents who rejected this supported the idea of encouragement. Conditional responses mentioned the need to recognise that formal staff development must be part of the job to be a requirement, and that it must cater for individuals and might be particularly appropriate for new staff. Some respondents felt that distance education did not require anything 'special' in terms of staff development.

Section Three: Career and Reward Aspects of Distance Education

A. Personal

20. Question 20

If there were definite career advantages for becoming involved in distance education, would it make any difference to you now?

	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	2	2.9
Uncertain	3	4.3
No	58	82.9
No response	7	10.0
	70	100.0

Summary:

There was almost unanimous agreement that 'career advantages' would make no difference. It seemed that respondents could only perceive ' career advantages' as promotion, or could not conceive of there ever being 'career advantages' in distance education for academics, apart from those already in distance education administration.

B. Academic

21. Question 21

Would your standing as an academic be advantaged by extensive involvement in distance education? Disadvantaged? No difference?

	No. of Respondents	%
Advantaged	3	5
Disadvantaged	26	42
No difference	33	53
	62	100

Selected Comments:

Advantages

* It gives you the chance to share ideas and work.
* Your job applications show wider experience.

Uncertain

* You are more widely known to people in education, but disadvantaged in the university because you get no time for research and publication
* It depends on how effective you are.

Disadvantages

* Distracts you from research but your standing may be high amongst your professional colleagues who also teach external students.
* Is seen as less scholarly by other academics in conventional universities.
* You have lower visibility and slower promotion if introduced to external teaching early in career.
* You don't get merit for your published study guides.
* High involvement in distance education lowers your academic standing.
* Distance education is not understood by the majority of the academic community: therefore disadvantaged.
* Professional bodies do not see distance education as a viable pursuit of engineering.
* In tertiary education, it is the person who produces the research papers that gets the promotions - not the one who produces an excellent external course.

Summary:

Distance teaching distracts from research, research is what counts in tertiary education, therefore distance teaching is disadvantageous. Academics at traditional institutions do not comprehend the external mode of teaching.

22. Question 23

If you had to opt between 'academic' rewards and 'institutional' rewards for involvement in distance education, which would you choose?

	No. of Respondents	%
Academic rewards	28	40.0
Undecided/combination	17	24.3
Institutional reward	15	21.4
No response	10	14.3
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Frequent Comments

* Academic recognition is important for future positions.
* Should be academically rewarding, but it isn't.
* If forced, I'd choose academic rewards (re research) but I like both, and it's what the university recognises.
* Academic recognition = career advantages, as you can then seek higher positions.
* Academic recognition makes you more 'portable'.

Typical Comments

* Don't expect rewards.
* Prefer recognition of colleagues.
* External students are more interesting to teach anyway.
* Prefer association with other skilled teachers.
* Happy with present balance.
* Extramural teaching has put me on the map (with my own people) (Maori studies).
* I've found over time that I can change any job for what I want it to be anyway...

Notable Comments

* We should be given credit for the work involved.
* Obviously everyone wants promotion (4 responses).
* If the institution is being rewarded, those working in it should be rewarded for the extra work involved.
* Promotion opportunities are important.
* Would like more time and study leave.
* It's age related - institutional rewards first, then, when secure, academic rewards more important.

Summary:

An interesting institutional pattern emerged - the CAEs wanted more academic rewards (57% to 26%), Deakin wanted more institutional reward (63% to 25%) and Massey had a large (50%) undecided or wanting both. However, there was confusion over the distinction between academic rewards and institutional rewards as the former in effect should produce the latter.

C. Professional

23. Questions 19 and 22

Are there any career advantages for those involved in Distance Education in your institution? Does your institution reward those involved in Distance Education? If so, how?

	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	6	8.6
Uncertain/equivocal	-	-
No	59	84.3
No response	5	7.1
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Yes

* Can venture into new aspects of teaching e.g. radio.
* Have been promoted from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer.
* It is growing field and therefore there could be career advantages.
* Might get promotion within the institution.

No

* Severe disadvantages - time, promotion, salary, leave, compared with those not teaching off-campus students.
* None apart from personal satisfaction.
* No incentive to research or scholarly publication.
* You work mostly with undergraduates. Opportunity and incentive to work with post-graduates reduced.
* No visible advantages or rewards (9 responses).
* In fact involvement with teaching is downgraded.
* Distance education is intrinsically valuable, but there is no structural reward.
* The institution says it does, but the administrators get the overseas trips.
* There is no recognition at all for people who are good at distance teaching.
* In fact they are overworked, teach in weekends etc.
* Rewards are the contact with students.
* Advantages go to the administrators in distance education, not the teachers.

Summary

Very few believed that there are career advantages/institutional reward, and this would have been higher except for two recent promotions. Most felt seriously disadvantaged or unrecognised. Strong intrinsic rewards and respect from external students were reported. However, there were few extrinsic, promotional and career advantages given by the academic schools. On the other hand many academics felt that distance education administrators were valued by their institutions and did get rewards of conference travel and promotion. If there are rewards they are not visible for academics, but highly visible for administrators in distance education.

D. Evaluative

24. Question 24

Ought your institution reward you differently for involvement with distance education than for conventional teaching and research?

	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	32	45.7
No	34	48.6
No response	4	5.7
	70	100.0

Selected Comments:

Yes

* The additional burden should be rewarded.
* Should balance time realistically.
* Should improve resources or else reduce load.
* External students are a different ball game - should reward in terms of time and leave
* The heavy commitment should be recognised.
  Should recognise the extra time in weekends and interruptions during the week.
* Extra time and resources not necessarily extra money (5 responses)
* Compensate for heavy loads, both individual and departments.
* Need to recognise special abilities.

No

* Must do both, it's part of the job, but internal/external should not be weighted equally in workload etc.
* If teaching was well rewarded so too would external teaching.
* We don't reward teaching in general.
* Distance teaching is teaching - if separated from conventional teaching would suggest that distance education is not academic or scholarly.
* Would lead to staff unrest at extra differential.
* Would need lots of evidence and thought.
* There are sufficient rewards in the system already.
* Personal satisfaction is vital.
* Should be rewarded for excellence and enthusiasm, not area of activity.
* Distance education is just an application of academic skills and philosophy in a different sense.

Summary:

In mixed-mode institutions there was greater division over separate rewards. Where reward was sought, it was in terms of working conditions - study leave, better time allowances, resources, coupled with a plea for the general recognition of teaching per se.

Section Four: Distance Education

25. Question 25

Is there anything else you would like to say about distance education?

Main Categories of Response	No of respondents
Pressure on staff, compared with conventional institutions	14
More institutional commitment - funding, staff	15
More institutional commitment - advanced technology	6
Not enough evaluation of distance education systems	2
Policy, forward planning needed, less piecemeal development	5
Must demand high standards	3
Stimulating, great challenge, rewarding	3
Good quality, and great students	3
Missing is the academic stimulation that comes from on-campus, face-to-face teaching	5
Should be wide consultation in distance education	5

Selected Comments:

* The institution needs more generous investment commensurate with its reputation.
* I'd like to restate my belief in distance education - it's one of the most important things we do.
* It's not possible to do it well without working at it.
* Staff are at a disadvantage compared to other universities re research and writing, but have the challenge of working in a stimulating environment with motivated students.
* Distance education does fill a social and political need. It is important to provide second chance education to people living in the community.
* It's clearly filling a need - there has been astonishing expansion.
* Distance teaching adds a discipline to instructional preparation.
* Should include general interest courses (as well as credit courses).
* Sometimes the externals suffer from the pressure on staff to put more effort into internal teaching.
* There is evidently a very great need for it.
* More consultation wanted - statewide, nationwide etc.

Section Five: Conclusions

Policy

Personal

Only one respondent had completely negative feelings. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents had positive attitudes, generally relating to open access and the stimulation of working with mature students - "Highly desirable and effective method of making tertiary education available...interesting, enthusiastic, hardworking people to teach."

No-one was totally displeased with the distance method per se. Displeasure was linked with lack of resources, lack of initial skills, ignorance of field and such like. Pleasure ranged from mild acceptance to enthusiasm - "enormous pleasure". The challenge was enjoyable - "...it's a helluva workload and limits my research time, but it's great - and experience increases satisfaction."

Most respondents became involved in distance education because it went with the job, - "I happened to take a job at the institute and it was part of the job". A relatively large number 'grew into' it as institutions changed - "I was sent into distance education when program began". A corollary is that there has been a great deal of 'on the job' training.

Academic

There was overwhelming agreement (94.3%) that satisfactory academic criteria can be met by distance education, although two kinds of reservations were expressed by nearly half these respondents:

i) There is a need for face-to-face contact between teacher and students;
ii) Some courses have different needs, especially for face-to-face contact e.g. laboratory experiments.

A majority (81.4%) believed research could be undertaken though only a few specified areas/topics for research - "It's a fairly new area and all sorts of questions need investigation." Few indicated they were engaged, or would engage, in such research. Some respondents thought the question related to opportunities for students to engage in research, which they supported.

Professional

There was a distinction drawn between stated and written institutional policy. Many respondents were sure there was a stated policy which was rarely written and not easily available. A number of respondents indicated they were unaware of any stated policy - "I presume it does have a policy, but I've never heard it stated".

There was a measure of cynicism that the unstated policy was that external studies existed to boost student numbers on the cheap, - "fluctuates from time to time in order to have the largest number of students that is economically viable". Many respondents had difficulty in articulating the policy. There seemed little congruence between stated and operative policy, leaving the inference that the policy was not clearly thought out. Most respondents saw their viewpoint as fitting well with that of the institution. However, a considerable number of these used qualifiers, including some who saw themselves as more committed, keener, wanting to go further, than the institution.

Many respondents expressed concern about inadequate resources.

Evaluative

Views on what the institution's policy ought to be were individual, with the major pattern suggesting a need to provide more, ie. to enhance in various ways what was being done - "The institution should do more; refine organisation; promote internally for acceptance; encourage; plan better with clearer goals; provide more teachers, better material, more centres; develop methods of communication." This correlates highly with respondents who saw a good fit with institution policy.

Less than one in ten (5.7%) reported their institution as not effective, and three out of four reported effective or very effective - "...Some very successful and spectacular accomplishments." Many had problems with lack of formal evaluations/criteria/goals etc. - "not sure what the goals are; not sure how to judge" - but felt that their institution was effective. The evidence was in the students' response - "Yes, but only because of the goodwill of our students." Concerns were expressed about the drop-out rate, heavy demands on willing staff, lacking of resources etc. - "Yes, but only through sheer dedication beyond what is reasonable by people in external teaching."

Development

Personal

The viewpoint of nearly two-thirds of respondents had changed, usually because of experience, as awareness about the complexities of distance education increased - "developed over time - appreciation of needs and technical aspects of distance education"; "growth with external studies; you see how it can work and where it clearly doesn't". The change was particularly positive for Massey respondents - "became more positive, more aware of new techniques, more educated about extramural teaching"".

The views of a further 10 per cent had "changed in detail but not in principle". Those whose views were unchanged tended to have been "always in favour of it".

Academic

Most were interested to read available research and academic literature, but more than half of these attached conditions to their readiness. In particular, the need for time, direct relevance and easy accessibility of material was applicable to many of the 'qualified' and 'low priority' responses - "if time was available to do so", "if it was stimulating and appropriate to what I was doing", "provided it was readily available, not going to great lengths to seek out research". A prior commitment to subject areas was an issue for several - "...provided I understood what it was about and it addressed my area of study; question of priorities always an issue".

The 'unqualified' affirmative response showed interest, openness and recognition of the need for exchange of information in the field - "A good thing - we need to share experience and knowhow".

No one was unwilling to participate in seminars and workshops on distance education. About one-third of respondents gave unqualified affirmative responses, the other two-thirds indicating that their participation would be conditional - mainly on relevance and time - "time always a problem; good to get together and look at new trends in distance education".

Gippsland Institute had the highest proportion of unqualified affirmative responses (50%) and relevance was the main conditional factor. Massey had the highest proportion of conditional responses (80%) followed by SACAE (67%) and time was mentioned as an inhibiting factor most frequently by these respondents.

Professional

It was generally agreed that special skills are required for teaching externally. Those who demurred tended to recognise the different requirements, but deny that the skills are 'special' - "Don't think they are special skills, rather different skills, more emphasis on writing than verbal and oral abilities."

Comments related mainly to the skills involved in writing and structuring material for external students, emphasising the communication skills and 'empathy' required in working with them - "have to be able to write better - much more structured than lectures"; "empathy with needs and problems of students; very good skill at written communication". Frequent reference was made to necessary personal characteristics of external teachers, such as perseverance, sympathy, commitment, patience, different administration skills and different attitudes. Half the respondents accepted that they had gained professionally from their involvement and some were very definite that they had - "most certainly - learnt far more than I've taught". Including qualified responses - "I think I have" - about two-thirds (62.9%) answered positively. The general feeling was that the development of writing enhances the organisational processes which are relevant to other teaching modes.

About a quarter (24.3%) of respondents were uncertain or felt they had not gained professionally, often because they could not separate the skills involved from those of internal teaching - "communication skills for distance education already developed - extension of skills I've already got".

Evaluative

Two main forms of staff development were suggested. Firstly, the practitioner-centred form focused on opportunities for development through such activities as discussion, seminars, workshops, visits, study leave and self-education - "send staff to other centres in Victoria and other states - constant interchange with other external centres".

The second form emphasised the importance of professional assistance in training, especially of new staff, but also in relation to the development of study materials, teaching skills and new technology - "Staff induction essential", "Highly skilled personnel to advise on new technology". Time was frequently mentioned as essential for staff development -"Time off to write and re-write courses", "More time for planning".

Other general comments suggested that opportunities were already available, a few indicating that they should be increased.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64.3%) were unwilling or unlikely to consider taking a qualification in distance education, many because they felt they were too far advanced in their careers to undertake further formal study - "not now - perhaps 10-15 years ago would have considered it", "not attractive to senior lecturer", "perhaps more relevant/attractive to younger academic". Readiness to undertake short courses or projects was mentioned by some, but others felt knowledge could only be gained on the job - "has to be learnt on job. Can't read about it without doing it". Lack of time, and unwillingness to increase workloads for limited gain, compared to subject-related research were further deterrents - "not prepared to increase my workload for a course I couldn't totally utilise".

About a third (32.9%) were willing to consider taking a qualification - "formal course would perhaps force me to give it closer attention" - but relevance, career prospects, time, and other commitments, were conditional factors - "would have to look at course according to my personal and professional need", "only if it did not interfere with other commitments".

Only a fifth of all respondents agreed definitely that formal staff development should be a requirement and some of these specified that time must be provided by the institution - "should be part of professional commitment provided by institute rather than in 'own' time". Including conditional responses, just over half (54.3%) supported required staff development in some situations, with 42.9 per cent opposing it.

There was considerable resistance to the term 'required': most respondents who rejected this supported the idea of encouragement - "encouragement and opportunity but not enforcement". Conditional responses mentioned the need to recognise that formal staff development must be part of the job, and that it must cater for individuals and might be particularly appropriate for new staff - "yes, but not across the board; if staff have difficulties in preparation of study material then help may be necessary. Must be considered for new staff." Some respondents felt that distance education did not require anything 'special' in terms of staff development - "no more than staff involved in internal teaching".

Careers and Rewards

Personal

There was strong agreement (82.9%) that 'career advantages' would make no difference 'now'. It seems that respondents could only perceive 'career advantages' as promotion. In fact they did see great career advantages for administrators in distance education.

Academic

Distance teaching distracts from research; research is what counts in tertiary education: therefore distance teaching is disadvantageous - "you are more widely known to people in education but disadvantaged in the discipline because there's no time for research and publication". Academics at traditional institutions do not comprehend the external mode - "It is seen as less scholarly by other academics in conventional universities."

In choosing between 'academic' rewards and 'institutional' rewards, an interesting institutional pattern emerged - the CAEs wanted more academic rewards (57% to 26%). Deakin wanted more institutional reward (63% to 25%) and Massey had a large (50%) undecided or wanted both. However, there was confusion over the distinction between academic rewards and institutional rewards as the former, in effect, should produce the latter.

Professional

Less than one in ten (8.6%) believed that there were career advantages/institutional reward (and this would have been higher except for two recent promotions). Most felt seriously disadvantaged or unrecognised - "Severe disadvantages - time, promotion, salary, leave, compared with those not teaching external students." Strong intrinsic rewards and respect for external students were reported - "Distance education is intrinsically valuable, but there is no structural reward", "Rewards are the contact with students." If there are rewards, they are not visible for academics, but highly visible for administrators in distance education: "The institution says it does, but the administrators get the overseas trips."

Evaluative

In mixed-mode institutions, there is greater division over separate rewards. Where reward is sought, it is in terms of working conditions, study leave, better time allowances, resources coupled with a plea for the general recognition of teaching per se.

Summary of Conclusions

This project sought information from a sample of academics and administrators working in distance education to try and identify -

(1) institutional policy as it related to distance education

(2) the rewards that academics perceived they received, or failed to receive, from participation in distance education.

Seventy individuals were questioned from four Australian institutions - two universities and two colleges of advanced education.

The major findings were as follows:

1. Most respondents became involved in distance education because it was part of the job, rather than through choice. However, a high proportion, 90%, including those with some reservations, now have positive attitudes to external study.

2. There was overwhelming agreement that satisfactory academic criteria could be met by distance education. A solid majority also said that the area was open to responsible academic pursuit.

3. There was considerable uncertainty by respondents as to whether either a stated or an unstated policy referring to involvement in distance education existed at their institutions. Just over half felt that both existed, but respondents were often unsure what the stated policy was and tended to be cynical about, or unable to articulate, that policy. There seemed little congruence between stated and operative policy.

4. Most were willing to read and research academic literature about distance education but time, direct relevance and easy accessibility were frequently conditional factors. No one was unwilling to participate in seminars/workshops - but willingness was often dependent on time and relevance. About a third of respondents were willing to participate unconditionally in each case.

5. Most respondents agreed that special skills were required for distance education teaching, particularly in relation to writing and structuring material, and in communicating with students. There was less certainty that professional development had been gained through involvement in distance education. Inability to separate the skills developed through internal and external teaching was often a problem.

6. Suggested opportunities for staff development focused on practitioner-centred activities and on the provision of training. The need for staff induction was frequently mentioned. Only a minority felt unconditionally that staff should be required to undertake formal staff development, although many were in favour of encouragement.

7. Very few believed that there were career advantages or institutional rewards for 'academics' in distance education compared to those for administrators. Respondents found it difficult to distinguish between academic and institutional rewards. Strong intrinsic rewards were reported, and nearly all believed that career advantages would make no difference 'now'.

The place and status of distance education on the periphery of tertiary education seem to be confirmed by the mixed, ambiguous, responses of academic staff to the questionnaire. On the one hand there is strong support for distance education, interest in it, commitment to and readiness to continue in the distance education mode. Further, there are indications of personal and professional growth through involvement in distance education. On the other hand responses to those questions focusing on career and rewards suggest that academic staff by and large do not see that their careers are linked with, or arise from, or are enhanced by participation in the distance education field.

This reservation is compounded by the ambiguity of responses about institutional policy. By and large the situation, as reflected in the responses, is that institutional statements of policy are not clear, that academic staff are not made aware of such policy and that induction of new staff to the policy and the expectations of the institutions is less than satisfactory. Nonetheless, the large number of responses that gave positive commitment to distance education suggests distance education is supported by academic staff.

This is further evident in responses to questions about staff development. The need for special skills to be effective in distance education is broadly recognised. However, academic staff do not develop such skills as a result of a deliberate policy with provision of staff development activity. Rather, the responses suggest that such development occurs as 'on the job' training. It should be further noted that while a significant number of respondents were sure that development had occurred, it was not clear how such development could be demonstrated.

Thus, it was concluded that institutions designated as major providers in distance education:

- did not have a clear statement of policy, as perceived by their staff, on how to fulfil their role as major distance education providers;
- did not offer training for academic staff in the different skills for distance education;
- did not have a reward structure and career path for academics which recognise the dimension of distance education.

Nonetheless it was found that, while distance education is perceived by practitioners to be on the periphery of tertiary education, it does flourish; and to those involved in it, distance education has a vigour which is drawing them towards a new paradigm of learning and teaching.

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